



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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PARADISE VALLEY WOMAN ARRESTED ON IMMIGRATION FRAUD RELATED CHARGES

PHOENIX- Sonia Iris Falcone, 40, of Bolivia and Paradise Valley, Ariz. was arrested without incident at her Paradise Valley home this afternoon based on a warrant executed by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. A four-count indictment, returned by a federal grand jury in Phoenix on January 10, 2006, was unsealed this afternoon in federal court. Falcone is charged with Unlawful Possession of an Immigration Document, Perjury, Making a False Statement in an Immigration Document and Attempted Unlawful Procurement of Naturalization.

The indictment alleges that Falcone fraudulently obtained an alien registration card by engaging in marriage fraud that she perjured herself and made a false statement related to information on U.S. Immigration Form N-400 (Application for Naturalization) and that she attempted to gain naturalization into the U.S. by unlawful means.

U.S. Attorney Paul K. Charlton stated of the charges, "The vast majority of people we prosecute who are in this country illegally are people of modest means. This case is a reminder that people with significant resources will be prosecuted as well."

"Resorting to perjury and making false statements to get immigration benefits are extremely serious offenses," said Roberto G. Medina, special agent-in-charge of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) office of investigation in Arizona. "Those who choose to so blatantly compromise the immigration law are going to be held accountable and the flagrant violations seen in this case are not going to be tolerated."

Falcone made her initial appearance in federal district court at 3:45 p.m. today. She was released upon the surrender of her Bolivian passport, her "green card" and the passports of her children to ICE agents. She is also required to post a \$50,000 cash bond by Tuesday, February 21, 2006. Her trial date has been set for Tuesday, April 4, 2006.

A conviction for Unlawful Possession of an Immigration Document, Making a False Statement in an Immigration Document and Attempted Unlawful Procurement of Naturalization each carries a maximum penalty of ten years in prison, a \$250,000 fine or both. A conviction for Perjury carries a maximum penalty of five years in prison, a \$250,000 fine or both. In determining an actual sentence, the assigned judge will consult the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, which provide appropriate sentencing ranges. The judge, however, is not bound by those guidelines in determining a sentence.

An indictment is simply the method by which a person is charged with criminal activity and raises no inference of guilt. An individual is presumed innocent until competent evidence is presented to a jury that establishes guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

The investigation preceding the indictment was conducted by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. The prosecution is being handled by Mary Beth Pfister, Assistant U.S. Attorney, District of Arizona, Phoenix.

CASE NUMBER: CR-06-0015-PHX-ROS
RELEASE NUMBER: 2006-030(Falcone)

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